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NEW BOOKS REVIEWED.

BY CLAYTON HAMILTON AND CHRISTIAN GAUSS.

"THE GOLDEN HYNDE."*

THE main difficulty in attempting to estimate the value of the work of Mr. Alfred Noyes is that we are likely to be bewildered by his manifold and eager productivity. "The Golden Hynde and Other Poems," though it is only the third volume of his verse to be published in America, is the sixth of his volumes to appear in England; and Mr. Noyes is at present only twenty-seven years of age. His fecundity is amazing, and his variety is even more so. He has written poems in innumerable measures that have heretofore been used in English verse, and has invented many measures of his own. He has sung to the tune of masters as diverse as Swinburne, Blake, Rossetti, Tennyson and Heine, with a reckless facility and joyous grace, and has informed all his work with an individuality of charm. He can write a ballad or a lullaby, a song or a symphony, a light lyric or an ode; and he writes them all with the same extraordinary technical accomplishment and dauntless ease. He has not yet developed a blank verse of his own that is completely organized, and his spontaneity of rhythmic variation seems as yet inconsonant with the restrictions of the sonnet form; but he has written no verse that is bad, and much that is very, very good. Perhaps he is most at home in the triple measures which Mr. Swinburne has taught him how to wield.

It is safe to say that even the master himself has seldom surpassed the fluent melody of such lines as these, from "Orpheus and Eurydice":

* "The Golden Hynde and Other Poems." By Alfred Noyes. New York: The Macmillan Company. 1908.

" And they that were dead, in his radiant music heard the moaning of
doves in the olden

Golden-girdled purple pinewood, heard the moan of the roaming sea;
Heard the chant of the soft-winged songsters, nesting now in the
fragrant golden

Olden haunted blossoming bowers of lovers that wandered in
Arcady;

" Saw the soft blue veils of shadow floating over the billowy grasses

Under the crisp white curling clouds that sailed and trailed through
the melting blue;

Heard once more the quarrel of lovers above them pass, as a lark-
song passes,

Light and bright, till it vanished away in an eye-bright heaven of
silvery dew.

" White as a dream of Aphrodite, supple and sweet as a rose in
blossom,

Fair and fleet as a fawn that shakes the dew from the fern at break
of day,

Wreathed with the clouds of her dusky hair, that kissed and clung
to her sun-bright bosom,

On through the deserts of hell she came, and the brown air bloomed
with the light of May."

There can be no doubt whatever of Mr. Noyes's ability to versify. Although he is still very young, he has already mastered the mechanism of his art, and is prepared to say with permanence of form whatever may be given him to say. The deeper question remains to be considered whether or not the things he has to say are of sufficient importance to warrant the hope that in him English poetry may find a successor to the great Victorians. The evidence as yet is incomplete; but a thorough study of his recent volume gives me faith to venture an affirmative prediction. To be sure, it is not yet possible to formulate his message,—much less to weigh and measure it. We can do that in the case of Keats: all that is necessary is to quote the last two lines of the "Grecian Urn," and explain them with sufficient fulness of understanding. Shelley also said one thing all his life; and it is conceivable that his message might be formulated in a single sentence,—though Matthew Arnold failed to do it in his famous glittering phrase. But Mr. Noyes, who has said so many different things, has as yet not said the one thing he was born to say. That very diversity which so amazes us in his work is

probably a penalty that he pays for not yet having found out precisely who he is. He will not be truly great until, like Keats and Shelley, he shall succeed in revealing unity beneath his multiplicity.

But whatever may be the one thing that shall constitute his message, after his genius shall have found the centre around which it must be destined to revolve, I have faith that Mr. Noyes will say it; and the reason is that I have faith in the man himself, as he stands exhibited in all his work. His productivity and his variety are indicative more emphatically of his strength than of his incompleteness. He is productive because he is healthy; and he is various because he is divinely capable of being interested in "a number of things,"—to quote the "Happy Thought" of the Poet Laureate of Childhood, whom in many wise ways Mr. Noyes resembles. His healthiness of spirit is a boon for which to thank the gods. Nothing is the matter with his body or his soul. In this age of morbid introspection, he never looks upon himself to curse his fate. He never whines or whimpers: his sadness is the deep great sadness of a happy man. He religiously believes in being happy; and his triumphant youthfulness is a glorious challenge to the sort of maunderers who are forever saying, "Ah! but wait till you have suffered!" After all the moanings and the caterwaulings of the sorry little singers, we have found at last a poet to whom the world is not a twilight vale of tears, but a valley shimmering all dewy to the dawn, with a lark song over it.

Only two things, so far as I can see, may stop him. There is, of course, a certain peril in his facility. He writes so easily and well that he may be tempted sometimes to write merely for the joy of the working. Some of his poems are already just a little thin: they are done beautifully, but they did not of necessity have to be done at all. But his other danger is more considerable. In several of the poems of this latest volume, he shows a tendency to intellectual dogmatism. He expresses good thought in good verse, instead of writing poetry. This is especially true in the pieces in which he inveighs against war, with a deliberate reversal of Mr. Kipling's thunderous imperialism, and in those other pieces in which he translates his general truth into the too particular terms of Christian dogma. He is least representative of his England when he strives consciously to deliver a laureate

utterance. When an intellectual or moral purpose gets in his way, he usually misses that perfect emotional fusion of content and expression which is poetry.

But these are, after all, only the defects of his qualities. Mr. Noyes is by far the most promising of all the younger English poets, because of his vigor and variety, his freshness of personality, and his ease of art. His career should be watched hopefully by all lovers of literature. We cannot now say what the future has in store for him; but it seems safe to predict that if any poet now writing is to inherit the mantle, it is he.

CLAYTON HAMILTON.

GÉRARD DE NERVAL AND THE FRENCH SYMBOLISTS.*

THE unhappy German poet Gutzkow, who, after having tried suicide ineffectually, finally in a chloral stupor overturned his lamp and burned himself to death, wrote a somewhat too long novel, "*Die Ritter vom Geist*" ("The Knights of the Spirit"). In a certain sense the brief book of Mr. Symons with its studies of the symbolists might better wear that title, and whatever one may think of its doctrine, its charm of style and the interest of its contents will certainly recommend it. The strange group of literary figures there presented were for the most part dreamers of millennial dreams who failed altogether when brought *aux prises* with reality. Vagabonds of foot and mind they wandered through their century, and doubtless no movement and no epoch can show so pathetic an array of lives as are those of Gérard de Nerval, Villiers de l'Isle Adam, Arthur Rimbaud, Paul Verlaine and Jules Laforgue. They were convinced with that old prophetic Abbot, Joachim of Flora, that the Age of the Spirit was at hand. They belonged to that race which believes that those who lose their lives shall save them, and they found fame, as therefore most of them would have desired, posthumously. Gérard de Nerval is the spiritual father of French symbolism. It is now just a hundred years since he was born, and the publication of a revised edition of Mr. Symons's book following closely upon the biography of Gérard by M. Ferrières will possibly

* "The Symbolist Movement in Literature." By Arthur Symons. New York: E. P. Dutton & Co. "Gérard de Nerval" Par G. Ferrières. Paris: Lemerre.